Performance of mid-day meal scheme

772. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that mid-day meal scheme for school children has been performing below par;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the annual target and the shortfall noticed during the last two years; and

(d) the steps taken to make the scheme more effective and meaningful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) No, Sir. During 2003-04 and 2004-05, 10.57 crores and 10.89 crores children respectively were targeted for coverage under the scheme. No shortfall was reported.

Some of the main concerns with regard to implementation of the Scheme are as under:—

(i) provision of infrastructure for the programme;

(ii) observance of hygiene, and;

(iii) wholesome quality of the food served.

Efforts have been made to suitably address the above concerns in the revised guidelines of the scheme issued to State in December, 2004. States are being constantly exhorted to make all possile efforts to ensure mid-day meal of proper hygiene and nutrition.

Enrolment in higher education

773. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether only around 9% of the population in the age group of 18-23 years is enrolled in the higher learning institutions in the country compared to 87.00% in the US and 16.4% in China;

(b) whether to make higher education more accessible and affordable, Government propose to provide free land to private players to set up colleges and universities; and